Comprehensive performance assessment

Charnwood Borough Council
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Introduction

1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is part of the wider agenda set out in the Local Government White Paper *Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services*. The White Paper encourages greater focus on improved services for local people by freeing good councils from central government controls and restrictions, and providing poorer councils with more, and better focused, support for improvement. CPA is the first step in this process, that of making an overall judgement of where each council stands.

2 This report presents an analysis of the council’s overall performance as well as two short diagnostic assessments which cover important areas of responsibility. It also includes an assessment of the council’s benefit service by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, and the appointed auditor’s assessment of performance on each of the main elements of the code of audit practice. The appendices to this report set out further details on the findings of these assessments and the framework for CPA.

3 The official version of this report is also available on the Audit Commission’s web site at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk). The Audit Commission cannot verify the accuracy of and is not responsible for material contained in this report which has been reproduced by another organisation or individual.
Summary of Comprehensive Performance Assessment judgements

4 Charnwood Borough Council is a fair council which has some good services in priority areas. It is beginning to implement its plans to improve services.

5 The council has clear ambitions. It works effectively with its local strategic partnership and has a clear understanding of local challenges and problems. However, long term ambitions are unclear as current ambitions are relatively short term.

6 Priorities for the council are less clear and reflect the short term nature of current ambitions; non-priorities are not explicitly identified. Communication of priorities is inconsistent and there is no hierarchy of priorities or sense of relative importance. However, the council has based many of its priorities on sound consultation. The council has lacked some of the mechanisms to ensure its continued focus over time, but has demonstrated a track record in some areas such as economic development, cleaning and leisure services.

7 The council is in the process of addressing its own internal capacity and has a sound debt free financial position and is able to invest in services. It also has capacity building partnerships which are delivering results particularly the Charnwood strategic partnership, county partnerships and links with local businesses. At a local level the council works well with the parishes. Councillors and officers are clear about their respective roles and there are positive officer and councillor working relationships.

8 Performance management is developing but not fully embedded into the day to day running of services. Although monitoring arrangements have substantially improved implementation is varied. Risk management is not fully integrated into all the council’s services and there is limited analysis of whether they are delivering value for money.

9 The quality of service as measured by national performance indicators is above average. The 2002/03 national indicators show that 59 per cent are above average with 25 per cent in the top quartile and 20 per cent in the bottom quartile. The council is performing well in some priority areas such as economic development, promoting a sustainable environment, and leisure. However, the council performs poorly in the delivery of decent homes.

10 The council’s track record of improving services is mixed. National indicators for 2002/03 showed that 65 per cent of indicators had improved on the previous year. The council has delivered improvements to the physical environment in the town and improved customer access. However the council failed to improve in some priority areas such as recycling, decent homes and housing re-let times.

11 The council is self aware and realistic about the challenges it faces. It has learned from itself and others. The council has recognised its gaps in capacity and is making a number of investments which will contribute to improvement. The council plans to work both in partnership and internally to improve key service areas such as customer services and recycling.
## Summary of assessment scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top level question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<td>What is the council trying to achieve?</td>
<td>Ambition</td>
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<td>Prioritisation</td>
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<td>In light of what the council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?</td>
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<td>Future plans</td>
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<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
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**Recommendations**

12 It is recommended that the council:

- actively and promptly shares the findings of this assessment with the public, partner organisations, councillors and staff; and

- uses the strengths and weaknesses identified in this report as the basis for its improvement planning.
The locality

Charnwood Borough Council is in Leicestershire, in the triangle formed by Nottingham, Leicester and Derby. It has a population of 153,000 and is one of the largest districts in England. Just over one third of the population lives in the main university town of Loughborough. Of the remaining two thirds many live in larger villages and small towns of the Soar and Wreake valleys and on the edge of the city of Leicester.

The borough ranks 265 in the indices of deprivation (out of 354) and is a relatively affluent area. Loughborough Shelthorpe ward ranks 1,648 and Hastings 1674 while Lemyngton ward ranks 1,971 (least deprived ward nationally 8,414).

People from minority ethnic groups form 8.3 per cent of the population with the largest group being Asian or Asian British. In Lemyngton and Hastings wards in Loughborough 23.4 per cent and 22.7 per cent of residents are of Asian or Asian British ethnicity, and the largest groups are Indian and Bangladeshi. Full time students aged 16+ years make up 9.7 per cent of the population (the average for England and Wales is 5.1 per cent).

The council

Charnwood has 28 wards with 52 councillors who are elected to the council once every four years. The next election is in May 2007. Since May 2003 the council has been led by a Labour and Liberal Democrat administration. In the four years prior to this, the administration was shared between the three political parties represented on the council (Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrat).

The council’s constitution is based on a cabinet with leader model, with a cabinet of currently nine councillors (seven Labour and two Liberal Democrat) usually meeting fortnightly. The council of all 52 councillors normally meets once every six weeks. There are four scrutiny committees which also meet once every six weeks. All three political parties are represented in the role of chairing the scrutiny committees. A scrutiny commission co-ordinates the work of the scrutiny committees.

The council employs approximately 600 staff (full time equivalents), organised into 13 service units, the majority of whom are based in Loughborough.

General spending by the council for 2004/05 is planned to be £13.5 million general fund and £4.7 million for the housing revenue account (HRA). In addition the council plans to spend approximately £17.3 million on servicing its housing stock. The council also maintains a high level of capital expenditure investment (£13.2 million in 2003/04 and £11.6 million for 2004/05).

The council carried out, as requested, a scored self assessment for this inspection against each of the corporate assessment themes. The self assessment was informed by a peer review commissioned by the council and undertaken by IDeA in January 2004. Using the Audit Commission’s scoring mechanism the council has assessed itself as ‘good’.
What is the council trying to achieve?

Ambition

21 Strengths outweigh weaknesses.

22 The council has a clear understanding of local challenges and problems. Its ambitions are set out in the corporate plan for 2003/07 ‘Charnwood together’. The vision for Charnwood is to be ‘a borough where everyone enjoys the highest achievable quality of life in respect of housing, work, health and the environment’. Local people were involved, through extensive public consultation, in the development of the corporate plan. As a result, the corporate objectives reflect the key issues for local people.

23 The strategic aims are clear and challenging. They are supported by short term action plans with key targets to measure success. The aims are:

- a prosperous and vibrant local economy;
- a clean, safe and healthy borough;
- leisure and cultural opportunities for all;
- a sustainable environment;
- decent homes; and
- a well managed council.

24 The council works effectively with its local strategic partnership (LSP), the Charnwood strategic partnership (CSP). The community strategy clearly reflects the local and national agenda. Its vision is for ‘improved quality of life for everyone living and working in Charnwood’ and focuses on meeting local needs and providing better services. The council develops its ambitions with other stakeholders for example parish councils, local organisations, and community groups. It is continuing to develop the ambitions while offering visible leadership to partners. The council leads for example, to produce and implement action plans to deliver the community strategy. It is also active in engaging parishes through the parish plan process. As a result ambitions are shared, owned and understood by partners.

25 Ambitions for recycling, culture and leisure are clear and tangible as are the council’s ambitions for its planning services. Planning aims to maintain the quality of the environment, developing Loughborough and securing section 106 funding. For example, leisure projects in the villages, open spaces and funding health facilities in Birstall. These are realistic improvements for local people.

26 The council is effective in its community engagement and leadership role. The council finds out systematically what people want and takes the lead in areas where people expect the council to take a lead. For example, post office closures, and airport noise. The council was chosen to be a community cohesion pathfinder because of early pioneering work done by Charnwood Arts. One result
is that using information gathered the council is able to interact with ethnic communities proactively and further improve its knowledge of their needs.

27 The council is demonstrating a clear commitment to equalities and diversity; it has achieved level two and plans to achieve level three of the equalities standard. The equalities service produces guidance for local companies on how to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in video, CD and booklet form as well as conducting workshops. They also have service planning guidance in the form of the service equalities framework, designed to assure fair access for all to services.

28 The council lacks clear long term ambitions. For example, the council's ambitions on customer service are unclear and not robust as there is no joined up customer access strategy. There are elements of sound developments for the new customer contact centre and in the use of ICT. Overall the vision for customer access is unclear and the result is that plans are uncertain.

29 The council does not provide effective leadership in communicating ambitions effectively. Although historic ambitions, for example recycling, are effectively communicated, the corporate and strategic direction is not yet fully understood and owned. The staff development and appraisal system (PDR) is being rolled out and had not yet been evaluated. The council cannot be sure that it is communicating ambitions effectively in a way that can be understood in day to day working.

Prioritisation

30 Weaknesses outweigh strengths.

31 The council’s documentation and alignment of its priorities lack clarity. The vision is underpinned by four key areas for improvement, six long term strategic aims and five core values alongside three 'leading in Leicestershire' themes. These in turn are supported by headline priorities for 2003/07 plus ways to apply the core values and the leading in Leicestershire themes. Each strategic aim has its key issues with headline action plans and key performance measures. It is unclear what the hierarchy of priorities is as there is a long list of sub objectives. This leads to confusion at service level about what takes priority in reality. Successive documents and policies are being aligned and rationalised to reflect the current thinking. It is difficult to know what would not be a priority as strategic aims are broad ranging. For example, the HRA business plan contains a list of priorities, but there is no indication of their relative importance and there is no clear indication that tenants were involved in setting these priorities.

32 Identification of non priorities is evolving slowly. Non priorities are decided as part of the planning process which is itself in the process of change. The 2004/05 revenue budget and service plan process examined service budgets in relation to the corporate plan priorities, to enable resources to be focused more effectively, and to provide scope for expanding key priorities such as recycling and homelessness. Priorities are ordered for cabinet as either statutory or in corporate plan.

33 The effectiveness of internal communication is mixed. Priorities are not communicated effectively to all staff. Some staff find it difficult to name the most
significant areas for improvement and to know how to identify what is the day to
day priority at service level. This leads to deadlines being missed and services
focusing on inappropriate or non priorities. Not all internal stakeholders are
regularly consulted. Arrangements for consulting and briefing groups of staff are
inconsistently applied. Feelings of cynicism, rumours and misunderstandings
result. For example the recent decisions to change car parking and staff
refreshment arrangements are not understood by staff and have created unease
and demotivation.

34 There is a clear basis for community strategy priorities. The community strategy
has featured consultation with a partnership forum of nearly 100 local groups and
organisations. The forum has debated the vision and aims and established the
priorities. The draft strategy was subject to extensive public consultation in early
2003, and comments fed into the strategy to reflect better the concerns of local
people.

35 There is a clear basis for the council's priorities. The council has a track record of
consulting on various aspects of service delivery and budget levels and the
council's priorities are linked with public feedback. For example the residents of
Burder Street and Ratcliffe Road were consulted about schemes which affect the
areas to establish views about how planning intervention has added value and
about the new recycling centres. The corporate plan was amended post public
consultation to tie in with public priorities and now links well with what matters to
residents.

36 The council has not made any significant shifts in resources to match priorities.
There are some small scale examples. For example resources for the Mayoralty
Division are now used for presentations about local democracy in Charnwood
and the history of the borough. This was aimed at local schools and
organisations, and 40 such presentations are given each year. As a result the
council contacts and engages with more local people annually. Revenue
contributions to capital are now being diverted to support revenue spending for
example to support recycling and the Soar Valley leisure centre to enable the
delivery of extra services to the community. These decisions are not yet clearly
linked into the medium term financial planning process to mirror the strategic
aims of the council and its performance.

Focus

37 Weaknesses outweigh strengths.

38 The council has lacked the necessary frameworks to ensure focus. Performance
management, although improving, has been weak and has not been used to
develop effective focus. The council has not consistently developed the means to
support focus on its key ambitions. For example, it has not developed plans to
support the decent homes standard and the approach to the stock options
appraisal has been weak. Consequently, although some key areas such as street
cleaning have improved consistently, work in housing has not.

39 Up until now, the political style was based on three party consensus which
impeded focus. There was little progress on many key issues such as recycling
and resulted in the council missing its 2003/04 recycling target. Much time was
spent in the detail of staffing issues and small amounts of funding through
‘supplementary estimates’. This has now changed but it has detracted from the council’s ability to show focus over time.

40 The council knows what matters most to local people and concentrates its efforts on achieving impact in some priority areas. The corporate plan, ‘Charnwood together’, sets out the council’s priorities and is the primary focus for the work programme, medium term planning which is carried out through the recently introduced integrated service planning and budget process.

41 The council uses its forward programme effectively to plan and communicate its work. The programme details all the key decisions for the next 12 months within timetabled stages and highlights key decisions to be taken. This helps the council to focus on its priorities, and staff, partners and the public are informed about the council’s work programme and key decisions.
How has the council set about delivering its priorities?

Capacity

42 Weaknesses outweigh strengths.

43 The council is not yet making the most of its internal capacity. There has been a lot of change in a short time after a long period when there was no fundamental change, which has naturally resulted in some unease amongst staff and an unsettled atmosphere. There are key posts still vacant in the housing service, and some staff are unclear about their overall roles and responsibilities. Sickness absence has increased, largely in line with an increase in stress related illness, which is affecting short term capacity. Although there is a comprehensive range of human resources policies and procedures, some aspects of people management policy are not yet embedded, for example attendance management, where there is a procedure which is not fully effective. Training and development, although widely available to staff, managers and councillors are not yet fully linked to the council’s priorities, or fully evaluated.

44 Staff and managers are not fully involved or consulted about the management of change. Staff briefings are used inconsistently and there is no mechanism for upward briefing. This combined with the restructuring has had a detrimental effect on morale and some staff are confused and frustrated about the current changes. The council has recognised this and is in the early stages of resolving the issue.

45 External auditors stated that although systems are adequate overall, some weaknesses need to be addressed in the areas of financial control including monitoring of financial systems and standards of financial conduct.

46 The council has been slow to implement modern procurement. It has procured capital programmes for improvements to the housing stock through a mixture of in-house provision and external contracts through competitive tendering exercises, although it has begun to use term contracts more recently.

47 Decision making has been slow but is now improving. The council spent too much time on detail rather than key issues. The new political style is encouraging speed and quality of decision making and has more effective delegation to officers. This has facilitated organisational change and begun to make up for previous delays in achieving recycling targets. Councillors and officers are clear about their respective roles and there are positive working relationships.

48 The council has an open minded approach to using alternative methods of service delivery. Some of its ‘front line’ services are provided by external suppliers, for example its leisure facilities and recycling are delivered by an external contractor. It has an open approach to the delivery of housing for example, looking at a range of solutions for the housing stock through the stock options appraisal.

49 The council uses partnerships effectively to deliver its priorities and add to its capacity, but does not consistently evaluate their effectiveness. It is active in a wide range of partnerships; for example the Charnwood health forum, the Leicestershire economic partnership, and with the university. Partners describe
the council as a significant contributor to county wide initiatives such as Leicestershire local government online, for which Charnwood developed the community portal which gives Leicestershire villages a linked website. Other outcomes from partnership working include delivering the Spark Children’s Festival, Operation whirlwind which has led to increased detection and conviction rates of prolific offenders and the bridge housing advice service with Charnwood Shelter project. It also has a compact with the voluntary sector. However, evaluation of partnership work is mixed. Some partnerships have a formal approach such as the crime and disorder partnership but for others it is more ad-hoc, for example the benefits service has no formal monitoring of standards set in any of the service level agreements other than the one in place with the rent service. These are needed to meet the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) performance standards framework.

50 The council has made good use of external expertise to enhance strategic capacity. Pending an appointment to the new deputy chief executive role, the former director of resources was kept on for three months then an interim director of resources was brought in, (a former county treasurer and director of resources in a unitary council). This director had overview responsibility for housing, property and contract and public services and progressed work on an income and charging strategy and an accommodation strategy, on housing management, the decent homes strategy and stock options appraisal. Similarly an interim change manager has been used to good effect within human resources, coaching and training staff to support reorganisation.

51 The council currently has the financial capacity it needs to achieve change. The council has adequate financial reserves and is in surplus. The council has improved its capital position by achieving debt free status and a recent agreement to sell land worth £13 million.

**Performance management**

52 Weaknesses outweigh strengths.

53 The performance management framework is still developing with the aim of more effective integration with financial planning and the strengthening of manager accountability for performance. In the past, the council did not monitor or manage performance in an effective way. Since the arrival of the new chief executive in autumn 2003 the council has had a more vigorous approach to its performance monitoring arrangements. It also has a good supporting database and monitors key trends. Although the council is now trying to embed a performance management culture, some weaknesses still remain. For example, some targets are being missed, such as for recycling, and not all indicators are improving. Some plans are not SMART, for example the housing service plans have a number of positive features and all include decent homes as a key objective, but all plans lack milestones and target completion dates. Some managers do not supply information about service performance in a timely way.

54 Risk management is not fully integrated within the council’s strategic or operational planning. The council has some elements in place such as a risk

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1 SMART specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely
management strategy and policy. It has also risk assessed some major projects, specifically in ICT. Service delivery plans in 2004/05 have taken account of corporate risks. However, this approach is not fully embedded and has not yet been combined with operational risk registers or integrated with other council systems, such as prioritisation for internal audit. This means that risk management is not fully effective as a prioritisation tool or resourced accordingly.

55 The council’s financial information provision arrangements are adequate. Under the medium term financial plan, there is monthly monitoring for councillors and officers from August to February, plus the first quarter in June. This has been determined on a risk basis. Between this time managers have direct access to the automated financial management system.

56 The council is in the early stages of ensuring value for money. It uses the best value review process to obtain some information, but does not use the service planning process systematically to assess whether services represent value for money. Housing improvement contracts have not been benchmarked with other providers. The council also has an inconsistent approach to using cost/benefits analyses in advance of new initiatives. For example, the capital strategy ensures that capital project appraisals are undertaken before discussion by cabinet, but the council has not traditionally benchmarked its commissioning costs and does not know if its in-house design services team are providing value for money. The impact is that the council has an incomplete knowledge of whether its resources are working in the best way to deliver value for money.

57 The council has partially implemented customer service standards. Generic service standards for users are understood by staff but vary in the extent to which they have been publicised to users. Although the council publishes leaflets which describe their objectives in serving the local population, and has a complaints procedure, it does not widely display service standards, for example, on posters at points of service. Customers are not aware what standards to expect for street cleaning or fly-tipping. The council recognises this and is developing a council wide approach as part of its customer service centre work.

58 Staff and managers generally know what is expected of them at service level and if they are achieving it. There are regular team meetings. There is also a new personal development review process which is designed to give staff individual targets related to the service plan. However, this process is very new and some staff appraisals were still being carried out at the time of the inspection. The council has not had time to evaluate the process to ensure that managers are using SMART targets in reviews. This means that the council is not yet sure of the effectiveness of the appraisal process in communicating how staff should deliver service plan aims.
What has the council achieved / not achieved to date?

Achievement in quality of service

59  Strengths outweigh weaknesses.

60  Overall customer satisfaction is above average. Of the 15 2000/01 national indicators relating to satisfaction eight were above the national median and seven below. Of those below, five related to housing and benefits. Unaudited satisfaction data from the 2003/04 MORI poll showed that out of 25 satisfaction indicators those interviewed were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ in 18 or 72 per cent. Respondents were ‘undecided’, ‘fairly dissatisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’ in seven indicators or 28 per cent. Satisfaction levels are mostly positive with pockets of low satisfaction around housing and benefits.

61  Parish surveys showed satisfaction with the council to be around average, with good levels of satisfaction for refuse and recycling and provision of play areas. Most parishes were less satisfied with the cleanliness of public space in their area.

62  The comparative performance of the council, as measured by national performance indicators, is above average. The 2002/03 figures for national best value performance indicators (BVPIs) (the most recent available for comparative performance) showed that 59 per cent of the council’s BVPIs were above average, 25 per cent were in the top quartile and 20 per cent were in the bottom quartile.

63  The council measures itself against its six key aims and the following paragraphs consider achievement under these aims.

A prosperous and vibrant local economy

64  The council is contributing effectively to making the local economy more vibrant and prosperous. Town centre regeneration, for example in Shepshed and Loughborough, has improved the environment for pedestrians. Monthly farmers markets are well attended in Loughborough town centre.

65  The council works well in partnership with Loughborough University. For example the innovation centre now open on the university campus, has established a substantial local employment base. Initiatives such as the Ark Business Centre are aimed at increasing and enhancing industrial workspace and employment opportunities.

Leisure and cultural opportunities for all

66  The council has historically invested in and been active in promoting leisure and culture. Achievements in this area include a Chartermark for leisure in January 2004; a Quest accredited leisure centre; high user satisfaction (80 per cent) with the active lifestyle GP referral scheme; and cultural and recreational services awarded two star ‘good’ best value inspection score in 2002.
67 However, overall satisfaction levels do not fully reflect these achievements. In 2003/04, 49 per cent of users were very or fairly satisfied with sports/leisure facilities and events; 38.5 per cent were very or fairly satisfied with museums and galleries; and 41 per cent were very or fairly satisfied with theatres/concert halls.

**A clean, safe and healthy borough**

68 The council takes effective action to ensure the borough is clean, safe and healthy. There are consistently clean streets, as found by an ENCAMS survey and customer satisfaction, and improved public conveniences - two Loughborough town centre public conveniences have won ‘Loo of the Year’ awards. Effective community safety initiatives in the town centre have resulted in a reduction in the incidences of anti-social behaviour and vehicle crimes. Beehive Lane car park was awarded the AA secure car park award in 2001 and 2002 and as a result vehicle crime incidents have reduced.

69 There is above average satisfaction with cleansing services: in a 2003 survey, 63 per cent of residents were very or fairly satisfied with keeping public land clear of litter and refuse, 84.2 per cent were very or fairly satisfied with the waste collection service overall; and 73.3 per cent were very or fairly satisfied with parks and open spaces.

**A sustainable environment**

70 The council is effective in its work towards a sustainable environment. It achieved top quartile performance for 2002/03 for recycling and waste minimisation and in the 2003 MORI survey, 77.7 per cent were very or fairly satisfied with the recycling collection overall.

71 In 2000/01, 78 per cent of planning applicants were satisfied with the service received; this puts the council in the second quartile. As a result of the work of development control the area benefits from good quality buildings and renovations for example, the refurbished Town Hall and Quorn Mills. Village design statements adopted for Barrow on Soar, Rearsby and Wymeswold mean that future developments will conform to the standard and quality required.

72 The council is clear in its understanding of the need for sustainable and effective flood alleviation. For example the major flood alleviation schemes undertaken at Stapleford Park, Cossington, Sileby and Rearsby reduce the risk of flooding in village centres.

73 There are some areas where the council has not achieved. The council is weak on environmental enforcement and the council is taking longer to deal with incidents of fly-tipping and abandoned cars.

**Decent homes**

74 The council is effective in its repairs and maintenance service. There is good satisfaction amongst tenants with housing repairs and maintenance. The council is in the top quartile for average SAP (energy efficiency) rating of local authority owned dwellings. The council is in the best quartile with 8.7 per cent of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished.
The council performs poorly on decent homes when compared with other councils. Its current work programmes are not designed to meet the decent homes standard and nearly 50 per cent of properties do not meet the DHS. Tenant involvement in Charnwood is underdeveloped and tenant satisfaction with the overall service was in the worst quartile in 2000/01.

A well managed council

The council has a mixed performance in meeting its aim to be well managed. It has met level two of the government equality standard. It has a strong performance on equalities, and was recently awarded the RNIB top employees award (for diversity and work experience).

The housing contact centre opened in January 2003 and in a survey, 85 per cent of respondents rated the service they received as good or excellent. There is above average performance on benefits processing and early compliance with the verification framework.

The average relet time for council housing is in the worst quartile, and the percentage of rent collected is below average; these factors both impact on council finances.

The council’s performance on employment of women and people from black and minority ethnic groups is poor. The percentage of top five per cent of earners who are women is in the worst quartile, and the per cent of top earners who are from black and minority ethnic groups is in the third quartile.

The Benefits Fraud Inspectorate found the council is providing a ‘fair to good’ service as it has a range of benefit policies and strategies, a commitment to work with key stakeholders and is achieving standard for the best value performance indicators.

Best value inspections in development control, ICT, and housing achieved one star ‘fair’ score. The most recently inspected service was development control.

Achievement of improvement

Weaknesses outweigh strengths.

The council has a mixed record of improvement in service performance. In 2002/03, the last year for which audited data is available, performance declined or did not meet targets against the previous year in some areas which are key priorities for the council, for example; percentage of waste arisings which have been recycled, percentage of new homes built on previously developed land, statutory planning targets and the average time to relet dwellings. However, overall 65 per cent of performance indicators improved reflecting an overall positive direction of travel but with significant shortfalls in key priority areas.

The following paragraphs consider achievement of improvement in the council’s priority areas. They show that, in general, service improvement is mixed.
A prosperous and vibrant local economy

85 The council has enhanced its provision in this area. Examples of improvements include the conversion of the former Loughborough bus station into the Rushes shopping centre has improved shopping facilities for residents. It is built on former derelict land and has resulted in associated improvements to the town centre such as pedestrianisation. ‘The Oak’, a 27 unit small business centre in Sileby opened in July 2003, converted from a redundant factory site, and 50 per cent of the units are let. The council is working effectively in partnership with the university to enable substantial growth in local employment and enhanced community use of sports facilities. However, some statutory planning targets are still not being achieved.

Leisure and cultural opportunities for all

86 The council has improved on its action against this priority, for example, the provision of new play areas, such as at Sidings Park in Loughborough, part of the Eastern Gateway regeneration area. The coach steps programme is raising the standard of sports provision across Charnwood. The expanded leisure pass scheme has increased visits to leisure centres; attendances at performances at the newly refurbished Loughborough town hall have increased.

87 Provision for children and young people is targeted effectively. The holiday activity play scheme had 5,874 participants in 2002/03 and 1,600 young people from the borough participated in the Leicestershire youth games.

A clean, safe and healthy borough

88 There are positives and negatives against this priority. There are fewer vehicle crimes and violent and sexual crimes are comparatively low and broadly in line with national trends. Resources have been allocated to introduce neighbourhood wardens to three council estates. There is a deteriorating response time to remove fly tips.

A sustainable environment

89 There are significant areas which have not improved against this priority. The council failed to achieve its 2002/03 recycling target due to delays in developing new initiatives. The percentage of new build on previously developed land is not improving. However, the cumulative percentage of new build housing on recycled land is increasing and approaching regional expectations.

90 There are also some positive initiatives. For example, the introduction of mobile recycling centres across the borough and the completion of the Birstall and Shepshed environmental improvement schemes.

Decent homes

91 There is little improvement in this key priority. The current work programmes are not designed to meet the DHS and the number of non decent properties is not reducing. Reduced staffing capacity led to delays in completing both the stock options appraisal and planned service improvements.
However, the HRA generated capital receipts are used to facilitate the provision of additional social housing in partnership with local housing associations through the allocation of £1 million per annum in social housing grant.

**A well managed council**

There is mixed performance under this priority. For example, some indicators are not improving such as housing re-let times and rent collection. After an improvement, performance on sickness absence is now deteriorating.

The council has improved its public website and 52 per cent of the council’s electronic transactions are now interactive from the customer point of view. Customers can now access the call centre in the evening and on Saturdays to discuss housing matters. Benefits accuracy and turnaround is improving, and there is a welfare visiting team. Council tax and NNDR collection rates have improved.

The Benefits Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) found the council’s capacity to improve to be ‘fair to good’. This is because there is a strong commitment from councillors and senior officers to the performance standards, to improve levels of service, and a track record of implementing internal and external audit recommendations.

Best value inspections in development control, information and communications services, housing services, leisure and cultural services all resulted in promising scores for prospects for improvement.

**Investment**

Strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Since the arrival of the new chief executive in 2003, the council has been putting effective building blocks in place to address existing gaps in capacity and to meet priorities. It has made recent investments in a number of activities including performance management, service planning, organisational development, risk management, and human resources development and partnerships.

The council is improving its performance management and now has a framework for managing performance. This sets out expectations about how to produce a service delivery plan. Service delivery plans translate into personal targets for heads of service for the most important items, which are then transcribed into the forward programme. Regular programme meetings review achievement of these targets in the presence of the leader, deputy leaders and chief executive. Any slippage on programmes is monitored and managed. There is a protocol for dealing with unacceptable performance, rewarding achievements and ensuring that the process fosters learning and improvement. It also sets out guidance on how to conduct performance improvement projects. In parallel, the council has an existing performance monitoring database which it is continuing to enhance, for example by a facility to select indicators by corporate priorities.

The council is investing in its own internal capacity to ensure that it has the ability to deliver improvements. It has concentrated on developing the capacity and skills to achieve change, and removed obstacles such as the ‘managed vacancy savings’ and ineffectual reorganisation processes. The council now has a
human resources strategy, the ‘performance through people’ strategy which has identified that managers need more support with managing sickness absence and employee relations, this is already in progress. There is also a communications strategy which has included the ‘staff discovery day’ and focus groups to address internal communications issues. An organisation and development officer is specifically responsible for implementing change management and risk management training, and the development and embedding of the new PDR process. At the end of April, 76 per cent of PDRs had been completed with an emphasis on performance targets, and their links to development needs, which means that individuals can now align their work to corporate aims.

101 The council has adopted the core values of customer first, equality, a high performing council, community leadership and partnership alongside a new initiative entitled ‘leading in Leicestershire’. This extends the core values and focuses on leading in the community, leading in innovation, and leading in quality public services. For example ‘community leadership’ focuses on helping people to find solutions to problems and identify new amenities and services, and empowering people to take action themselves in order to regenerate their communities. This is likely to strengthen the impact that community involvement has on the council’s future priorities and focus.

102 The council has a key commitment in its improvement plan to embed risk management fully into all of the council’s key planning and decision making processes. The strategic risks identified in the risk register have already shown improvement in the performance in housing services, for example in homelessness where the use of bed and breakfast was eliminated by the target date. The borough wide visioning exercise also came out of this process, as well as the local strategic partnership working group for the revision of the corporate plan, as did the increased allocation of resources to e-government.

103 There are firm foundations with funding for implementing e-government. The council has an e-government strategy and route map which has already supported such arrangements as the customer contact centre, new council website, and community portal.

104 The council responds well to internal and external challenge. It carries out internal health checks which lead to structural and staffing improvements, for example in legal services and communications. The council also uses external challenge, and has commissioned external health checks. It acted on a peer review in 1999 as well as implementing the recommendations of the recent peer challenge in January 2004. It has also implemented the ICT and leisure best value inspection recommendations.

105 The council is ensuring it has the necessary resources for investment. The medium term financial plan is in place and influences plans for the future. The council plans to develop it by linking it more solidly to the strategic aims of the council and to key performance indicators. It is helping to identify where service reductions need to be made and heads of services have to deliver this. The capital programme is now a three year rolling programme and financial arrangements have been tightened up. New schemes are only added if they have their own budget, for example, section 106 agreements. The council has a procurement policy which was updated in 2003. This outlines its approach to mixed economy of provision, and contains a procurement code of practice.
The council is successful in securing external funding. Developers have contributed section 106 funding contributions for the management and maintenance of open space, and for the Soar Valley leisure centre. The council has a good track record of accessing grant funding including DEFRA funding of £500,000 to support recycling schemes, GOEM funding for £150,000 for the community cohesion pathfinder and £150,000 over five years from Sport England to support sport and leisure development in areas with high deprivation and high ethnic minority populations. The council was also awarded an ODPM planning delivery grant of £141,000 in 2004/05; this is a performance reward initiative which rewards a number of areas including improvement in development control performance on major applications in the period October 2002 to September 2003. Overall, this means the council is well placed to fund future service and cross cutting improvements.

The council has not invested in ensuring that a key policy is fully implemented. The council has a child protection policy but its application is not rigorously applied to partners to whom the council refers young people. This represents a risk to the council and to young people.

The council is not currently investing in the decent homes standard (DHS). There is no strategy in place and it has not assessed the resources needed, although it is likely that the necessary investment will be in the region of £18 million. Its current work programmes are not designed to meet the DHS, so the number of non decent properties is not reducing.
In the light of what the council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?

Learning

109 Strengths outweigh weaknesses.

110 The council is self aware and is developing into an effective learning organisation. It recognises the need to listen to staff. For example the recent staff discovery day in April 2004 was held to enable staff views to be brought forward, to test out new ideas and develop solutions, and for senior officers and councillors to be visible and to communicate. Cross organisation working groups developed the day and it is planned to repeat it annually. Staff used interactive voting pads to respond to questions linked to the ‘leading in Leicestershire’ themes; 450 staff gave their views on learning and development. Action plans and increased training opportunities for staff are planned. As a result learning is now part of day to day management within the council amongst councillors, officers and staff.

111 There is an emerging culture that encourages staff to test out ideas and develop solutions which will benefit service users. For example, staff focus groups and task and finish groups explore issues in depth of which results are published and acted upon. During 2002 a cross section of employees formed a focus group looking at developing customer care standards for the council. This resulted in a ‘customer service standards’ document being drafted and implemented, plus an allocation of £5,000 from the corporate training budget to employ a consultant to provide training for all members of staff. During October, November, and December 2003 all employees were invited to attend focus groups. The information gathered was used to provide a starting point for themes in addressing priority issues for staff at the ‘staff discovery day’, in April 2004. A follow-up day for staff had been organised for 20 May 2004 to mark the national learning at work day. As a result some staff are beginning to feel more involved and more informed about the organisation in which they work and to understand better how to work together to achieve change.

112 The council has learnt from its own experiences and made changes as a result. In response to the peer review, it has drafted an approach to performance through people, and improved its approach to communication and consultation. The council has responded well to the best value inspection of cultural services of 2002. It has implemented most of the recommendations made in the report. This demonstrates a willingness to act on advice.

113 The council learns from others and makes changes as a result. In order to prepare for the 2004 BFI inspection, the service commissioned Capita to suggest improvements, and worked on the improvement plan in advance of the BFI inspection. The council implemented the action plan, developed a performance improvement strategy and appointed a training officer.

114 The council proactively seeks out learning from others and makes changes as a result. The information and communication technology service (ICS) participated in the national customer relationship management (CRM) evaluation exercise and is taking advice from Manchester Business School on the roll out of its
customer contact centre arrangements. This demonstrates that the council is willing to import good practice to improve services. As a result the service to residents is enhanced and more appropriate.

115 Learning is not systematically shared throughout the council. Systematic learning is restricted by the lack of capacity and an historical lack of corporate working. For example the council and the CDP cannot fully evidence the impact of the previous crime and disorder strategy as there is no process by which the learning could be captured and evaluated. Similarly in the housing service, good practice and benchmarking have not been used effectively to assist with meeting the DHS, even though the council are members of a number of relevant benchmarking groups such as HouseMark. This means that information is interpreted in a number of different ways and that the council is not making the best of its own good practice, risking duplication of effort.

**Future plans**

116 Strengths outweigh weaknesses.

117 The council recognises its weaknesses and has plans to address key gaps. Since the appointment of the new chief executive in autumn 2003 there has been a greater momentum for change. The coalition administration and the chief executive provide greater clarity and focus amidst a modernising agenda. This will enable the council to invest better in realising its long term ambitions.

118 The new communications strategy is designed to make the most of internal and external consultation, and the council’s image, working towards theme ‘leading in Leicestershire’. The council also recently held a ‘staff discovery day’ which included cross service focus groups to start building the process of internal communication and improve customer service.

119 The council is beginning to ensure that it has the necessary capacity to identify, implement and maintain improvement. The capital programme is now a three year rolling programme and financial arrangements have been tightened up. New schemes are only added if they have their own budget, for example section 106 agreements. The medium term financial plan is now in its first year and has begun to influence plans for the future. The council plans to develop it by linking it more solidly to its strategic aims and to key performance indicators. It is helping to identify where service reductions need to be made and where heads of services have to deliver these. For example, the management reorganisation involved some difficult decisions. The council previously operated what was in fact a policy of no compulsory redundancies but it has now accepted that this and the redeployment of staff is sometimes a necessary route to efficiency.

120 The council is improving its ability to address areas where it has not achieved what it wanted to. The council has a clear future plan which sets out a sustained focus to achieve the council’s ambitions in the ICT strategy/electronic government strategy and ‘routemap’. It plans to implement other Leicestershire local government online (LGOL) developed systems such as destination management, and integrating with partners’ systems. The council has robust implementation plans for delivering improved recycling. These include putting in place funding, equipment and publicity. Other future plans include the corporate equalities plan which outlines measures to reach level three of the equality
standard. The council is working towards adopting the CIPFA/SOLACE code of corporate governance and has carried out a self assessment. It will implement a new programme of councillor training, based on needs analysis. A key future plan for the way forward is the consultation and communication strategy. The council has a clear plan to review the effectiveness of the revised performance and development review process by July 2004 and to ensure that the lessons learned are incorporated into the process for 2005. As a result it is better placed to have key building blocks available to improve services.

121 The council is responding effectively to the peer challenge assessment that its scrutiny function is not achieving as much as it could. Planned changes to scrutiny include enhancing the scrutiny commission arrangements with thematic scrutiny committees, for example for performance scrutiny or customer care. Smaller groups will look at specific issues which will allow a cross cutting approach.

122 Some key partners and communities are effectively engaged in planning for the future. LSP partners are effectively influencing the vision for the borough of Charnwood. A series of workshops are planned to develop the vision towards 2016. Partners are involved in planning and implementation for crime and disorder reduction and there is consultation with residents through the crime audit. However tenants have not been involved in the preparation of the HRA business plan. As a result the effectiveness of some future planning is weakened.

123 The council has ambitious plans to ensure that it develops fully its community engagement. Liaison with key partners and local groups such as parish councils is to be formalised though a designated council ‘relationship manager’ for each body. This means that the council is well placed to enable communities and groups to be involved fully in planning for the future and to anticipate the diverse needs of the local population.

124 The council’s key plans (corporate plan, BVPP, community strategy) are not currently aligned. This partly results from the new administration and the new management inheriting and superseding previous plans rather than drafting new ones. As a result the aims and objectives of the council appear confused. A timetabled approach to realigning and refreshing all corporate plans is now in place.

125 The council’s performance on producing robust strategies and plans is mixed. The council’s housing strategy and housing revenue account business plan have been assessed as ‘average’ by the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM). Neither document met the ‘fit for purpose’ criteria. GOEM assessed the capital strategy as good, and the asset management plan as satisfactory. A more coherent approach is now in hand to deliver plans which match the statutory requirements.

126 Some future plans are not yet finalised. The human resources strategy ‘performance through people’ includes actions such as agreeing a job evaluation scheme, ways to promote attendance management and to improve relationships with the unions. However there is no overall workforce plan. The council does not have an economic development strategy. A new one is being developed and was due in June 2004. The council plans to develop a customer services strategy. The council does not know if it has the capacity to maintain further improvements.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Clear understanding of local challenges and problems</td>
<td>• Lack of long term ambitions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategic aims clear and challenging</td>
<td>• Some ambitions are not robust</td>
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<td>• Works effectively with LSP</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Some ambitions clear and tangible</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Effective community engagement and leadership</td>
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<td>Prioritisation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Clear basis for community strategy priorities</td>
<td>• Documented priorities lack clarity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Clear basis for the council's priorities</td>
<td>• No hierarchy of priorities</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Confusion at service level about what takes priority</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Effectiveness of internal communication is mixed</td>
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<td>Focus</td>
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<td>• Forward plan</td>
<td>• Ability to maintain focus on priorities is inconsistent</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Successfully focused on some priority areas</td>
<td>• Weak performance management has hindered focus</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Political arrangements detracted from focus over time</td>
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<td>Capacity</td>
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<td>• Flexible approach to using alternative methods of service delivery</td>
<td>• Staff morale</td>
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<td>• Active in a wide range of partnerships, including parishes</td>
<td>• Staff sickness</td>
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<td>• Good short term use of strategic expertise</td>
<td>• Some weaknesses in financial control</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Financial capacity</td>
<td>• Some aspects of people management not yet embedded</td>
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<td>• Council slow to implement modern procurement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Decision making slow but improving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance management</td>
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<td>• Financial information provision arrangements are adequate</td>
<td>• Performance management framework is still developing</td>
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<td>• Effective on some service areas</td>
<td>• Risk management is not fully integrated</td>
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<td>• Early stages of ensuring value for money</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Partially implemented service standards</td>
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<td>• Appraisal process not yet effective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement in quality of service</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Customer satisfaction is above average</td>
<td>• Quality not achieved in two priority areas</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 59% BVPIs above average, 25% BVPIs in top quartile</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality achieved in four priority areas</td>
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<td>Achievement of improvement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>• 65% of PIs improving</td>
<td>• Little improvement in four priority areas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Missed some key and statutory targets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Investing in improving human resource management to build capacity</td>
<td>• No current investment in DHS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Developing performance management</td>
<td>• Mixed track record of responding effectively to internal and external challenge</td>
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<td>• Developing mechanisms to improve focus on priorities</td>
<td>• Not all policies fully implemented</td>
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<td>• Effective response to external challenge</td>
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<td>• Successful in securing external funding</td>
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<td>• Self aware</td>
<td>• Learning is not systematically shared throughout the council</td>
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<td>• Developing into an effective learning organisation</td>
<td>• Duplication of effort</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Emerging culture that encourages staff to test out ideas and develop solutions which will benefit service users</td>
<td>• Good practice not always shared</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Learns from its own experiences and makes changes as a result</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Learns from others and makes changes as a result</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future plans</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Improved ability to address areas where it has not achieved what it wanted to</td>
<td>• Performance on producing robust strategies and plans is mixed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Some key partners and communities are effectively engaged in planning for the future</td>
<td>• Some future plans are not yet finalised</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ambitious plans for community engagement</td>
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<td>• Beginning to reassess plans regularly</td>
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**Scoring key:**
1 - Weak  
2 - Weaknesses outweigh strengths  
3 - Strengths outweigh weaknesses  
4 – Strong
Appendix 1 - Decent homes standard (DHS) diagnostic assessment

What is the council trying to achieve in relation to the standard? Does the council know the condition of their housing stock and their compliance with the decent homes standard?

127 There is a very high risk of service or function failure and/or poor outcomes.

128 The council has a clear ambition that its housing stock will meet the DHS, but this is not supported by clear plans and strategies detailing how the council will achieve the DHS by the target date of 2010.

129 Achieving ‘decent homes’ is one of the council’s six strategic aims and is also one of the aims of the local strategic partnership. This aim covers all housing within the borough, not just the council owned stock. The council is clear that it has a wider role as an enabler of new housing provision and in supporting the improvement of housing conditions in the private sector.

130 The council’s housing strategy contains a list of 22 priorities, which reflect both national and local priorities. One of the council’s stated priorities is ‘to ensure that all social housing properties are brought up to the decent homes standard by 2010’. There is no ranking of these priorities so their relative importance is unclear.

131 Currently, there is no detailed plan showing how the council intends to achieve its stated ambition to meet the DHS. The council has not yet asked its tenants and other stakeholders what their aspirations are about this ambition. These are major weaknesses which the council has so far failed to address.

132 Tenant involvement in Charnwood remains underdeveloped. There is a tenant participation structure in place. The Association of Charnwood Tenants (ACT) is the umbrella organisation for the four active tenants and residents associations and the 30 or so ‘tenants at home’ representatives. But these groups are not representative of the tenant population. Their involvement in developing plans and strategies for the housing service has been limited and they have not been involved in developing the current housing capital improvement programmes. This means that tenants are unable to effectively challenge the council’s approach to meeting the DHS.

133 The council has a housing stock of 6,062. A stock condition survey was completed in 2003, which consisted of 635 (10 per cent) internal surveys and 1,816 (29 per cent) external surveys. The survey found that the council had, over a number of years achieved a high level of maintenance and upgrading of its stock, but that 2,718 (43.6 per cent) properties failed to meet the DHS. The survey also predicted that a further 2,747 (44 per cent) properties may become non-decent within the next 10 years if improvements were not undertaken.

134 Maintenance of the council’s stock condition data is weak. The stock condition survey in 2003 revealed that up to 300 properties could be deemed as ‘unfit’. In order to check the validity of this data, additional surveys of these properties were undertaken. These surveys showed that not all properties were unfit and called
into question the process used for extrapolating data to the 90 per cent of properties that had not been surveyed. The council is currently arranging for the stock condition data to be externally validated to ensure that the stock condition data is robust enough to be used to plan future decent homes programmes.

135 The council’s system for managing housing condition information is fragmented. The council holds other information about the condition of its housing stock on a number of separate databases. This includes information on previous improvement work undertaken, the location of asbestos and the energy efficiency or SAP ratings for each property. Currently, none of these databases interface with the stock condition survey database. Information on responsive repairs is also not being fed into the stock condition data. This is affecting the council’s ability to effectively plan its improvement programmes.

136 The council’s approach to estimating future demand for its stock has some strengths. The council undertook a housing needs survey in 2003 which showed that demand for affordable housing in the borough significantly exceeds the current supply. The council has also recognised that demand for bedsit accommodation, much of which is located within its sheltered housing stock is falling, and currently the council has a number of these properties which it is unable to let. The council has been using its capital resources to remodel its sheltered housing schemes. At the current rate of progress, it will take up to 20 years to upgrade all the remaining schemes. The council lacks a longer term strategy which determines how this will be undertaken.

137 Financial capacity is lacking. The council currently estimates that it needs to spend £23 million to bring all its properties up to the DHS by 2010. This includes £10 million for properties that currently fail the standard and a further £13 million for properties that will become non-decent if improvements are not undertaken. Based on current projections the council will have £13 million to spend on meeting the DHS between now and 2010, leaving a funding gap of £10 million. In addition the council may have to spend an additional £47 million if it wants to improve and maintain its properties to a higher standard: the Charnwood standard, for which there is currently no financial provision.

138 The council’s progress with completing its stock options appraisal is slow. It completed the initial part of its stock options appraisal which focused on the council’s ability to meet the DHS from existing resources in 2003 and it plans to start the next phase of the options appraisal in June 2004. This includes the delivery of the consultation and empowerment strategy which entails detailed consultation with all tenants about the future options for the funding and management of the housing stock. During this consultation period, which will last from September until December 2004, tenants will be asked about their future aspirations for their homes and estates. Until this is completed the council is unable to determine what resources will be needed to deliver these aspirations.

139 The council’s approach to undertaking its stock options appraisal has serious weaknesses. The initial options appraisal undertaken in 2003 was updated in March 2004 and currently indicates that the establishment of an arms length management organisation (ALMO) is financially the most advantageous option for the council. However, the current options appraisal only considers three options: retention, ALMO and whole stock transfer. Other options such as PFI or partial transfers have not been considered. As a result, the council has not undertaken a thorough evaluation of the full range of options available.
140 Tenant involvement in the stock options appraisal is very limited to date. Members of ACT were involved in the recruitment of the independent tenants advisor. A corporate steering group which included tenants’ representatives was set up to oversee the consultation process, which was originally scheduled for the summer of 2003. However the work of this group lapsed and as a result progress with completing the stock options appraisal has been severely delayed.

141 Decision making within the council is slow. A new housing strategy group which involves officers, councillors and a representative of the ACT, started meeting in April 2004. The council plans to complete the stock options appraisal in December 2004, two years after it first started the process. Pace of implementation and the council’s ability to remain focused on important priorities is not always being maintained.

142 The council’s performance on producing robust strategies and plans which clearly assist in achieving the DHS is mixed. The council’s housing strategy and housing revenue account business plan have been assessed as ‘average’ by the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM). Neither document met the ‘fit for purpose’ criteria. The council is working closely with GOEM to ensure that both documents meet the criteria when they are submitted, which is likely to be once the stock options appraisal has been completed.

143 The council’s capital strategy has been rated as ‘good’ by GOEM and the asset management plan (AMP) as ‘satisfactory’. The capital strategy supports the overall approach to achieving the DHS, the asset management plan refers to a separate AMP being produced for the housing stock, which to date has not been produced and will be superseded by the production of a decent homes strategy. The council’s procurement strategy clearly sets out how procurement should be focused so that resources deliver value for money. The strategy also encourages the use of different forms of procurement including term contracts and partnering.

144 Service planning and service delivery is not integrated. The council introduced service delivery plans in 2004/05. The responsibility for achieving the DHS rests with the housing service. Property services and contract and public services have involvement in delivering the DHS as agents and contractors. Each has its own service delivery plan, none of the plans are fully integrated with the HRA business plan, as the current business plan is now somewhat dated. Tenants and other stakeholders have not been involved in developing these service plans. However, all service delivery plans contain clear linkages with the council’s strategic aims and all contain objectives which are related to achieving the DHS.

Is the council delivering its plans to meet the decent homes standard?

145 There is a very high risk of service or function failure and/or poor outcomes.

146 The council has not maximised its capacity to deliver the DHS. A thorough assessment of all the potential resources to support investment in the DHS has yet to be undertaken. Its current work programmes are not designed to meet the DHS and the number of non-decent properties is not reducing.

147 The council has traditionally used the major repairs allowance (MRA) which is £3.4 million per annum to fund its housing improvement programmes. Other potential sources of funding such as HRA generated capital receipts are used to facilitate the provision of additional social housing in partnership with local
housing associations through the allocation of £1 million per annum in social housing grant. The provision of new social housing is one of the council’s stated priority improvements for achieving its overall strategic aim of delivering decent homes for all.

148 Financial planning is varied. The council undertook a review of the main budget headings within the HRA as part of its preparations for identifying which costs would be funded by the supporting people regime. As a result extra resources were made available to spend on responsive repairs and planned maintenance. Support service costs are distributed throughout the council by the use of a comprehensive time recording system. However, there are no service level agreements in place to determine what level of service managers can expect to receive from the council’s support services.

149 Performance management within the housing service is weak. The council’s projections for the HRA show that it is forecast to maintain a surplus in each year to 2011/12 (except for a small deficit in 2008/09 and 2009/10) but goes into deficit from 2012/13. However, these projections are based on the council improving its performance on collecting its rental income and reducing the time it takes to relet its empty properties. Performance information supplied by the council shows that in 2003/04 the council only collected 96.62 per cent of all rental income due, the same as in 2002/03, whilst the time taken to relet empty properties increased from 55 days in 2002/03 to 86 days in 2003/04 and the percentage of rental income lost from empty properties increased from two per cent in 2001/02 to 3.4 per cent in 2003/04. Performance in these two key areas is not improving.

150 Staffing resources to deliver improvements are weak. The housing service has suffered from a reduced staffing capacity for substantial periods of time during the last two years. This was because of a variety of reasons including sickness absences and vacant posts not being filled quickly. The long term restructuring of the senior management team within the council has also caused uncertainty. This has led to delays with completing both the stock options appraisal and planned service improvements.

151 Partnership opportunities are not fully developed. The council has not yet explored the possibilities of working in partnership with neighbouring authorities to jointly procure and undertake improvement programmes. However it is currently working with a local housing association to re-model and refurbish a sheltered housing scheme. It also has plans to use a consortium of housing associations to redevelop some of its 370 PRC homes, subject to housing corporation approval.

152 The council is planning to enter into a partnership agreement with its in-house contract and public services unit to deliver the responsive repairs and planned maintenance service from April 2005 and it is hoped that partnering arrangements with other contractors will also be in place to deliver the DHS programme in 2005/06.

153 The housing service has been slow to implement modern methods of procurement. Capital programmes for improvements to the housing stock have traditionally been delivered through a mixture of in-house provision and external contracts following competitive tendering exercises, although term contracts have begun to be used more recently. The commissioning and management of these
contracts has been undertaken by the council’s property services unit. The costs of providing this service have not benchmarked with other providers so the council cannot demonstrate that this service is providing value for money.

154 Current work programmes are not designed to meet the DHS. This is a serious weakness as work currently being undertaken is not reducing the number of non-decent homes within the borough. The council has stopped undertaking work to its empty properties to ensure that they met the DHS, because this was having an adverse effect on relet times. During 2004/05 the council intends to undertake work to make fit and decent the 300 or so properties that were identified as unfit by the stock condition survey. A full DHS programme will commence in 2005/06 once the stock condition data has been fully validated and the council has decided how the work will be phased. This will leave the council just five years to complete all the work needed to its properties to ensure they meet the DHS by the target date of 2010.

155 The council’s performance on spending resources from the housing capital programme is poor. The budget was underspent for the last four years and over £900,000 is being held in the MRA reserve. The effect of this underspending is that tenants have to wait longer for improvements to be undertaken to their homes.

156 Tenant consultation is weak. There has been no detailed consultation yet with tenants regarding the council’s plans to meet the DHS. This is a serious weakness.

157 The council makes ineffective use of its customer information. Customer satisfaction surveys are undertaken when improvement works such as new windows or central heating are completed. These show that the majority of tenants are satisfied with the work carried out. Satisfaction is not monitored by age, gender, disability or ethnicity, so the council is unable to measure whether it is providing an equitable service. Although, this information is collected from tenants who report a responsive repair. Currently the results of these surveys are not reported to tenants and so they are unable to judge whether their comments have been used to improve future programmes.

How well does the council monitor its progress and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans?

158 There is a very high risk of service or function failure and/or poor outcomes

159 The council does not effectively monitor its progress in achieving the DHS. There is no decent homes strategy in place, no medium or long term targets have yet been set. The council has a poor history of spending housing capital resources and learning is not systematically shared throughout the housing service.

160 Target setting is weak. The council has set a target of reducing the number of non-decent homes by 380 during 2004/05. This is the first year such a target has been set. There are currently no targets in place for future years. The council accepts that this is a weakness. It plans to address this by the adoption of a decent homes strategy, which the council is hoping to have in place by July 2004.

161 Financial monitoring is ineffective. Capital spending was monitored by the corporate capital strategy group and by housing scrutiny committee. The housing
capital programme has been underspent for the last four years. The council has recently established a joint officer and councillor financial strategy group, which has met once so far. The work of this group will be supported by a separate officers group, which has yet to be formed.

162 Housing scrutiny committee has been more effective in challenging areas of poor performance within the housing service. For example it has looked at the reasons behind the council’s continued poor performance on reletting its empty properties. A new voids procedure has been implemented which is hoped will reduce relet times during 2004/05. However, the council has set itself a target of reducing its relet times to 25 days by March 2005, which appears overly ambitious given its past performance.

163 Performance management is not yet fully embedded. The housing service has some key elements of performance management in place. The housing service management team monitors its performance indicators every month and most staff in the housing service have regular core briefings and team meetings. A new performance appraisal system has recently been introduced and is still in the process of being implemented and so the results of individual appraisals have yet to be evaluated. It is planned that individual targets will be set as part of the appraisal process.

164 Management arrangements for service delivery are weak. There are no regular meetings between the three service heads who are responsible for achieving the DHS. As the council’s progress with reducing the number of non-decent properties is slow, this is a serious gap.

165 Risk management is undeveloped. The council has highlighted that reaching the DHS is an area of significant risk for the council. It is also described as an area of concern in the strategic risk register for 2004/05. However, no contingency plans are yet in place to deal with this identified risk.

166 Learning is not systematically shared throughout the housing service. The housing service is able to demonstrate a number of areas where it has used good practice, partnership working and learning from others to improve elements of its service, for example homelessness and housing advice. The housing service also provides an innovative and effective disabled adaptations service for its tenants via an in-house occupational therapist, positive features of which have been passed onto neighbouring authorities. However, good practice and benchmarking have not been used effectively to assist with meeting the DHS, even though the council are members of a number of relevant benchmarking groups such as HouseMark.
## Summary of decent homes standard diagnostic judgements and strengths / weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of focus</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the council trying to achieve in relation to the standard? Does the council know the condition of their housing stock and their compliance with the decent homes standard?</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>• Clear ambition to meet the DHS</td>
<td>• No DHS plan in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Achieving DHS is a strategic aim</td>
<td>• Tenant participation is underdeveloped, tenants unable to challenge council’s approach to meeting the DHS &amp; little involvement in the SOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Recent stock condition survey undertaken</td>
<td>• Stock condition data not yet externally validated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Recent housing needs survey undertaken</td>
<td>• Stock condition information held on a number of databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Capital resources used to fund the provision of new social housing</td>
<td>• Slow progress with completing SOA and not all possible options considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Partnerships used to increase capacity</td>
<td>• Responsibility for achieving DHS is split between three service units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Work to be undertaken during 2004/05 to tackle ‘unfit’ properties</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the council delivering its plans to meet the decent homes standard?</td>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
<td>Financial capacity not maximised to deliver DHS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Continuing poor performance in collecting rental income &amp; relets</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Improvements delayed because of staff shortages</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Slow to implement modern procurement methods</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Programmes not designed to meet the DHS</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor performance on spending capital resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Customer satisfaction surveys not being used effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well does the council monitor its progress and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans?</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>• Housing scrutiny committee has challenged areas of poor performance</td>
<td>No medium or long term targets for achieving the DHS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Learning used effectively to improve some areas of the housing service</td>
<td>• Ineffective monitoring of capital spending</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Performance management not fully embedded</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Learning not systematically shared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decent homes standard diagnostic assessment judgement</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Scoring key:
For each of the key areas looked at within the diagnostic assessments the need for improvement, based upon the risk of service failure and poor outcomes, is identified using the following scale.
- a = very low
- b = low
- c = high
- d = very high
Appendix 2 - Public space diagnostic assessment

How well does the council contribute to the management of the physical environment?

167 There is a low risk of service or function failure and/or poor outcomes.

168 The council is clear about its approach to managing the physical environment. It has good awareness about the context in which it operates, balancing the needs of the main town of Loughborough, surrounding villages, rural areas and Charnwood forest. This is reflected in the local plan which incorporates well developed planning policies for urban and rural issues. Managing the environment is a priority identified in the draft corporate plan and the council has been focused on these issues for some time and it is embedded into service delivery. The result is mostly high quality residential developments and successful integration of industry with minimum impact on green field sites. This is reflected in the fact that over the last four years 75 per cent or more building projects have been on previously developed land.

169 The council works well with partners to jointly manage the physical environment. It has built community capacity by working closely with town and parish councils to produce village plans and design statements. It works closely with local employers to ensure their expansion plans are met with minimum impact to the environment. For example, the council works with Loughborough University, the borough’s largest employer to ensure its rapid growth is sustainable in terms of the infrastructure of rented accommodation and transport links. This has resulted in a good understanding between the council, local parishes and the business community.

170 The council is successful in securing quality results in the borough through its own work and that of others. Recently, there has been considerable investment in Loughborough town centre. The market place is now pedestrianised and the town hall has also been improved. In partnership with the private sector, the construction of the Rushes shopping centre has regenerated a run down part of the town centre. In the more rural areas the council is involved in improvements within the villages of Shepshed, Mountsorrel and Sileby. Good quality housing and business developments are evident throughout the borough.

171 The council has a well resourced planning services unit. In addition to its statutory services it has design, conservation and ecology functions. This enables the council to deliver planning, conservation, landscaping and new build projects directly and provide professional advice to developers and partners, including the parishes, to ensure quality results. Similarly, the council is successful in securing section 106 funding to deliver improvements to public space. In the last 2.5 years it has secured £7.8 million which has been used on leisure projects in the villages including the Soar Valley leisure centre, open spaces and funding health facilities in Birstall. Overall the council’s investment in its planning and environmental function is delivering improvements that affect local residents directly.

172 The council’s approach to maintenance is good. All its buildings have planned maintenance programmes including those such as the leisure centres which are managed by a private partner. Open spaces and parks are well maintained and the council has agreements with parishes about standards of design and
maintenance for their play areas. National indicators for 2000/01 show satisfaction for parks and open spaces to be just above the national median for councils in England. More recently the un-audited 2003/04 MORI survey showed that 73 per cent of respondents were either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied. Overall the council is proactive in terms of maintenance and responds well to issues raised by the public.

173 The council responds well to issues raised by residents. The recently introduced customer contact centre is open six days a week and enables the public to report problems by phone. They can also do so via the website. Abandoned cars are usually removed within seven days and complaints followed up within 24 hours if deemed high priority. Residents can easily engage with the council about problems.

174 The council has solid measures in place to deal with incidents of nuisance and has a mostly accessible and responsive service. This is aided by the customer contact centre and an answer phone out of office hours. There are wardens allocated to council estates and the council works very closely with Loughborough University in dealing with any incidents that may involve students. There are also good monitoring practices to ensure local businesses are regulated through environmental health. The council is prepared to initiate legal proceedings to non-compliant individuals and companies.

175 The council’s approach to addressing wider environmental issues is mostly good. The council has undertaken substantial work directly, and in partnership with the parishes, on flood alleviation for communities in and around the river Soar. The council also has a clear stance on the genetically modified (GM) foods issue. There was formerly a GM site in the borough. After public consultation the council came out against the production of GM crops and initiated an information campaign to local residents. Air quality monitoring takes place in the borough and areas of risk have been identified. The council has some energy efficient initiatives in place including a corporate approach to ‘green’ procurement. A recent outcome from this is a switch in electricity supply to a company that supplies 50 per cent greenly produced power. However, the council does not have an accredited eco-management or audit scheme. Overall, the council is able to identify and plan for the possible effects of some global environmental factors but does not have overarching strategies in place.

176 The council’s plans to address the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by October 2004 are unclear. National indicators for 2002/03 show that current accessibility of buildings is at 30 per cent, below the median for councils in England. Access audits for its buildings not planned for completion until June 2004. Although it has set aside £50,000 for any subsequent works, without the audits it is not known whether this is sufficient. The council is not clear about the plans to improve accessibility of its leisure centre in Loughborough because it is managed by a private partner who, is deemed the ‘service provider’ and they are responsible for implementing DDA. The overall risk is that buildings operated by the council and its partners may not be fully compliant by October 2004 even where this is considered reasonable.

177 The council’s performance for processing planning applications is weak. National indicators for 2002/03 show that it performs below the national median for processing major applications within 13 weeks, other applications within eight weeks and is amongst the worst 25 per cent of councils in England for processing
minor applications. However, un-audited 2003/04 performance shows improvement in performance.

**Does the council help keep the locality clean?**

178 There is a low risk of service or function failure and/or poor outcomes.

179 The council is responsive to the views of residents and as a consequence ‘clean and green’ is a corporate priority. The 2003/04 un-audited MORI poll indicated that 51 per cent of those surveyed thought that clean streets was the most important of the functions. Overall the council is clear about the waste hierarchy of ‘reduce’, ‘reuse’ and ‘dispose’. The result is that the council is and has been consistently focused on cleaning and recycling.

180 The council is performing well on recycling. National indicators for 2002/03 show the council is recycling at levels within the highest 25 per cent of district councils in England. National indicators for 2000/01 also show that public satisfaction with recycling was amongst the top 25 per cent of councils in England. This has been delivered by implementing a number of initiatives including kerbside collections of dry recyclables and paper supported by good provision of local recycling centres. The impact has been additional recycling opportunities for residents which have been taken up by many residents.

181 The council has mostly sound plans to reach its 2005/06 recycling target of 36 per cent. The target will be met by continuing current arrangements and introducing kerbside collections of glass recyclables and an optional green wheeled bin which residents can purchase starting in 2004. The council however failed to reach its 2002/03 recycling target because of delays in making decisions about certain initiatives. It has now modified its action plans to ensure that lost ground is made up. Overall residents will have more recycling opportunities in the near future and the council has well resourced plans to meet the 2005/06 recycling targets.

182 Residents are satisfied with cleaning in the borough. National indicators for 2000/01 show that 68 per cent were satisfied with cleaning and 88 per cent satisfied with waste collection. Both are above the national median for councils in England and above the predictive score based on deprivation. Un-audited figures for the 2003/04 MORI poll show that 61 per cent of those surveyed were either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied with cleanliness. A 2003 EMCAMS (formerly the Tidy Britain campaign) survey was also positive about overall standards of cleaning in the borough. Un-audited performance in 2003/04 for the percentage of litter and other debris found on sample land in the borough is at 14 per cent, well within the council’s target of 28 per cent. Regular inspections and direct links between the parishes and cleaning contractor ensure a good standard of cleaning in the borough.

183 The council is comparatively good at minimising the amount of waste collected. National indicators for 2002/03 show that the council collects 307 kilograms of waste per head of population which is amongst the best performing 25 per cent of councils in England. The council’s recycling initiatives and publicity campaigns have contributed to this performance resulting in residents generating low amounts of residual waste.
184 The responsiveness of the cleaning service in the borough is mixed. The council’s customer contact centre allows residents to report issues such as fly-tipping six days a week. The council responds well to some issues such as putting in additional cleaning resources at the end of the academic year to address additional waste left by departing students. However there are some aspects of cleaning which are not improving and in some cases getting worse. Fly tipping response times have increased from one to three days as have those for dealing with abandoned cars. An additional special services vehicle was introduced in April 2004 to enhance capacity. Overall, there are some areas for improvement in cleaning.

185 Residents are unaware of what standards of service they can expect in cleaning. There are no published service standards for many parts of the service including street cleaning and cleaning in parks and open spaces. Similarly there are no advertised standards for fly-tipping or removal of abandoned cars. This means that residents are unable to gauge the standard of service against a particular expectation.

Does the council work with partners to improve community safety?

186 There is a low risk of service or function failure and/or poor outcomes.

187 The council has demonstrated community leadership through a crime and disorder partnership (CDP). It has a good understanding of the key issues within the borough which have been informed by the 1999 crime audit. The council has shown a commitment to allocate resources to the partnership. There is a full time community safety officer, administrative and publicity support, and a recently appointed officer to focus on anti-social behaviour. The council leads on initiatives such as CCTV, designing out crime, and diversionary activities for young people. The partnership is diverse and includes the police, the county council, the local chamber of commerce and youth services. The overall impact is a sound partnership that is jointly focused on the key issues that are important to local people.

188 The council’s approach to crime and disorder reflects the views of residents. It has been informed by a crime audit which took place in 1999, parish councils, local businesses and citizen’s panel surveys. This has identified anti-social behaviour and associated crime, theft from vehicles and burglary as the main issues for local residents. The council has now identified community safety as a corporate priority and is beginning to shift additional resources into this area. Community safety is treated as a priority at the highest level in the council.

189 The council has mostly been successful in mainstreaming community safety within its services. It has a number of planning policies aimed at designing out crime at new residential developments and businesses, has employed neighbourhood estate wardens on three of the larger council estates, used section 106 monies for community safety initiatives and has achieved secure car parking awards. The council has not yet completed a section 17 (mainstreaming) audit but is currently in the process of doing so. Overall community safety is embedded into many of the council’s services.

190 The council has delivered a number of positive initiatives within the CDP which have had an impact on crime. There has been widespread installation of CCTV cameras particularly in Loughborough town centre. This has provided evidence
that has led to over 250 arrests each year. Also in the town the main car park has been accredited with the ‘secure parking’ award. Other initiatives such as ‘pub watch’ and the supply of metal detectors to licensed premises have been well supported by local businesses and led to the confiscation of weapons. Residents have seen some tangible results from the council’s community safety initiatives.

191 The CDP has led to joined up working between different agencies which have resulted in some good crime prevention projects. ‘Operation whirlwind’ aimed at prolific offenders and led by the probation service is a scheme that has tracked over 1,000 prolific offenders across different agencies and has led to an increase in detection and conviction rates. The scheme is now being replicated in other parts of Leicestershire. Retail outlets in Loughborough work together and have a common radio communications system. There has also been a multi agency approach to drug abuse which includes the police, PCT and county council who use a range of measures from detection to rehabilitation. The partnership has developed the ‘Loughborough Eye’ which enables agencies, businesses and individuals to easily report incidents. Some of the work of the CDP is having tangible results that are visible to the public.

192 The CDP is having success in achieving crime reduction targets in some areas. Crime rates in the borough are comparatively low and mostly improving. National indicators for 2002/03 show that out of eight crime indicators, domestic violence is amongst the lowest councils in England, four indicators show below the median crime rates and three above the median. Four indicators are improving on the previous year, two getting worse with the remaining two unchanged. Key targets within the CDP strategy to be achieved over three years are to reduce burglaries by 235 and to reduce theft from vehicles by 21 per cent. Both are on track to be achieved based on current trends. Evidence on the success of the CDP in reducing crime is positive but only partial.

193 Performance management arrangements for the CDP are incomplete. There is quarterly monitoring and reporting on crime figures and progress on the strategy action plan. Councillors are well informed about current performance which is often analysed at a local level. The council also undertakes regular survey work to monitor fear of crime. The CDP is able to make informed decisions from this information. An example of this is changing CCTV positions on the basis of information on where incidents were taking place. However, the focus is mainly on implementation of initiatives and does not always extend to evaluating outcomes. For example, the numerous initiatives aimed at reducing burglary such as promoting neighbourhood watch and designing out crime schemes are measured in terms of take up. However, there is no knowledge about whether they have had any impact on burglary or fear of crime. The council does not have quantifiable targets for all types of crime which means it is not possible to get a complete picture of whether crime rates reflect the CDP objectives. The CDP is not fully informed about which initiatives are successful and which are not.

194 The impact of learning from the previous crime and disorder strategy (1999 – 2003) is limited. The previous strategy was thought to contribute towards a reduction in crimes of assault, burglary, robbery, other theft, racial incidents and domestic disputes. Criminal damage and community problems increased. Successful initiatives included the formation of ‘communities against drugs’, photo ID scheme to address under-aged drinking and secure car parks. However performance management was not sufficiently developed to evaluate the success
of these initiatives. Overall, the council and CDP are not fully evidence the impact of the previous strategy.

**Does the council contribute to activities to positively engage children and young people?**

195 There is a high risk of service or function failure and/or poor outcomes.

196 The council’s intelligence about the needs of young people is limited. The council generates formal quantitative information from user surveys undertaken throughout the leisure and cultural services. There is also the citizens panel and formal consultation with the parishes and surveys undertaken by partners such as schools, the youth service and Charnwood Arts. There is limited information about the needs of young people who may not be interested in sport or cultural activities or the hard to reach. Overall the council has only a partial understanding of what local young people want which is mainly in the area of sport and culture which it does use to inform programming.

197 The council’s approach to child protection policy is not rigorously applied to all partners. The council has adopted the county wide child protection policy. This includes checking all staff that have contact with children through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). All staff are appropriately qualified, CRB checked, inducted and given training on child protection policy and procedures and health and safety, and staff/child ratios are adhered to. All sports clubs/coaches who provide services or activities on behalf of CBC or in partnership with are checked to ensure that coaches have suitable qualifications, insurance and are CRB checked. Similarly the leisure management contractor running the leisure centres has child protection arrangements. The council gives advice and leadership to parish councils, playgroups and voluntary organisations informally as and when it is needed. No checks are undertaken for bookings for sports pitches that are for junior activity.

198 Performance management of activities for young people is corporately weak. Historically the council has taken a fragmented approach to information which is held within departments. The leisure services section does have some information about usage and user satisfaction. However, corporately the council does not have a picture of how many young people it is engaging with, whether it is reaching target groups or those from disadvantaged backgrounds or any sense of direction of travel in terms of improvement. The council also has very little information about the outcomes of its activities aimed at young people about whether a difference is being made to their life chances. The council is unable to evaluate whether it is directing resources into programmes that are making a real difference to the lives of young people in the borough.

199 The council’s approach to marketing activities to young people is inconsistent. There are some good initiatives in place such as the ‘wild card’ leisure pass scheme which was named and designed by young people. Individual departments within sports and arts produce literature with some external advertising and children’s activities are promoted in the councils own newspaper. The leisure management contractor also promotes activities for young people. However, marketing is not strategic in approach. There is no plan in place for the council to reach target groups of young people corporately or any system for evaluation. Communication is mostly focused around leisure users. Overall the
council’s approach is fragmented and the council does not know how successful its marketing to young people is corporately

200 Diversity issues are taken into consideration in the council’s approach to delivering activities for young people. It has very good links with local schools through sports development and delivers a range of activities for children with special needs. It also has specific activities for young people with disabilities within leisure centres. The ‘wild card’ is for young people to gain easier access to leisure activities. The council is taking a wider view when delivering services to young people engaging with some hard to reach and disadvantaged groups.

201 The council delivers good sports opportunities directly and in partnership on behalf of young people. These include the ‘active communities’ programme which targets deprived wards and provides opportunities for the disadvantaged. There is a large holiday activity play scheme which had 5,874 participants in 2002/03 and highly developed sports development function which engages with most children and college pupils in the borough. 1,600 young people from the borough participated in the 2003 Leicestershire youth games. Overall the council is having an impact in providing sports and arts opportunities. However there is a limited impact in terms of non-sporting opportunities for young people.

202 The council is effective at attracting external funding and building community capacity to deliver sports and arts opportunities for young people. It attracted over £103,000 of grant and sponsorship funding in the last two financial years to deliver activities or provide facilities for young people. It has also assisted clubs and voluntary organisations to access funding. This is adding to the council’s capacity to deliver opportunities to young people.
### Summary of public space diagnostic assessment judgements and strengths / weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Focus</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How well does the council contribute to the management of the physical environment?</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>• Clarity about what needs improving reflected by local plan and SPG&lt;br&gt;• Quality developments secured&lt;br&gt;• Well resourced planning function&lt;br&gt;• Visible outcomes from section 106 monies</td>
<td>• Comparatively weak planning application turn round times&lt;br&gt;• Unclear plans to be DDA compliant by October 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the council help keep the locality clean?</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>• Recycling performance top quartile&lt;br&gt;• Good plans deliver 2005/06 recycling targets&lt;br&gt;• Waste minimisation&lt;br&gt;• Satisfaction levels for cleanliness and waste collection and recycling above average</td>
<td>• 2002/03 recycling targets not achieved&lt;br&gt;• Lack of service standards&lt;br&gt;• Weak response in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the council work with partners to improve community safety?</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>• Solid CDP working through issues informed by the crime audit&lt;br&gt;• Good initiatives in the town centre&lt;br&gt;• Successful in mainstreaming community safety&lt;br&gt;• Additional investment in place for police community wardens</td>
<td>• Incomplete performance management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the council contribute to activities to positively engage children and young people?</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>• Wide range of sporting and cultural opportunities for young people&lt;br&gt;• Some good targeted initiatives aimed at deprived wards</td>
<td>• Limited intelligence about overall needs&lt;br&gt;• Weak performance management&lt;br&gt;• Child protection policy not fully implemented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public space diagnostic assessment judgement**

| B |

**Scoring key**

For each of the key areas looked at within the diagnostic assessments the need for *improvement*, based upon the risk of service failure and poor outcomes, is identified using the following scale.

- a = very low
- b = low
- c = high
- d = very high
Appendix 3 - Appointed auditor assessment

Appointed auditors are asked to score five areas which relate to the statutory code of audit practice. When scoring each area a range of issues are taken into account. These issues and the score that has been given in each area are set out in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area for auditor judgement</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Issues included in this area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial standing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Setting a balanced budget&lt;br&gt;Setting a capital programme&lt;br&gt;Financial monitoring and reporting&lt;br&gt;Meeting financial targets&lt;br&gt;Financial reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems of internal financial control</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Monitoring of financial systems&lt;br&gt;An adequate internal audit function is maintained&lt;br&gt;Risk identification and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards of financial conduct and the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ethical framework&lt;br&gt;Governance arrangements&lt;br&gt;Treasury management&lt;br&gt;Prevention and detection of fraud and corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial statements</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timeliness&lt;br&gt;Quality&lt;br&gt;Supporting records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legality of significant financial transactions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Roles and responsibilities&lt;br&gt;Consideration of legality of significant financial transactions&lt;br&gt;New legislation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scoring key
1 = inadequate  
2 = adequate overall, but some weaknesses that need to be addressed  
3 = adequate  
4 = good
Appendix 4 - Benefit Fraud Inspectorate assessment

204 The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) has undertaken the assessment in this appendix as part of the CPA process. The assessment covers two aspects, the current level of performance and the council’s proven capacity to improve. Each assessment is measured on a five-point scale (poor, fair, fair to good, good and excellent).

Current performance

205 Overall, we found that Charnwood Borough Council's benefits service was providing a fair towards good performance. Charnwood Borough Council's current performance demonstrates a number of strengths. These include:

- a range of benefit policies and strategies,
- a commitment to work with key stakeholders,
- compliance with the verification framework,
- comprehensive guidance and instructions,
- achieving standard for the best value performance indicators,
- a commitment to prevent fraud and error,
- controlling overpayments, and
- recovery of overpayments.

206 However, there are some areas where Charnwood Borough Council needs to develop further to fully meet the BFI and Department for Work and Pensions (the Department) Performance Standards framework. These include:

- an absence of measurable performance targets for individual members of staff;
- not monitoring caller waiting times;
- an absence of management checking on claims before a decision is notified to the customer;
- no written strategy to ensure maximum take-up of benefit;
- no written strategy for continuous improvement in age and level of debt; and
- no formal monitoring of standards set in any of the service level agreements, other than the one in place with the rent service.
Proven capacity to improve

207 We assessed Charnwood Borough Council's proven capacity to improve as fair towards good. Charnwood Borough Council was able to demonstrate the following positive aspects:

◆ a strong commitment from councillors and senior officers to improve levels of service in the benefits service, which was evidenced by committing funds to obtain a new benefits IT system;

◆ a strong commitment to performance standards;

◆ participation in a wide variety of different practitioner groups and successful bids for funding; and

◆ a track record of implementing internal and external audit recommendations.

208 However, the following areas led us to question the extent to which Charnwood Borough Council was able to demonstrate its capacity to improve:

◆ absence of targets that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound;

◆ a failure to publish a race equality scheme until March 2003 against a requirement for it to be published by May 2002; and

◆ by not undertaking management checks before decisions are notified, it is missing an opportunity to provide greater assurance that decisions are correct.

209 This report has been produced pursuant to powers contained in sections 10 and 11 of the Local Government Act 1999.
Appendix 5 - Framework for Comprehensive Performance Assessment

210 This comprehensive performance assessment was carried out under the Local Government Act 1999. Local councils have a general duty under Section 3 of this Act to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. Section 10 gives the Audit Commission the power to inspect councils’ performance of the general duty of improvement.

211 The main elements of the assessment were:

- a self-assessment completed by the council;
- accredited peer challenge to inform the council’s self-assessment;
- a corporate assessment of the council’s overall effectiveness in supporting services to deliver improvements;
- an assessment of the council’s service delivery performance through two diagnostic assessments on:
  - management of public space;
  - progress in meeting the decent homes standard;
- Benefit Fraud Inspectorate’s (BFI) assessment of benefit services;
- appointed auditor assessments of performance on each of the main elements of the code of audit practice; and
- audited performance indicators, inspection reports and plan assessments.

212 The assessment for Charnwood Borough Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 10th to 14th May 2004.

213 This report has been discussed with the council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission’s assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the council.